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Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

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Thursday, 19 March 2015, 10.15 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Llanos
	China	Mr. Yong Zhao
	Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
	Lithuania	Mr. Baublys
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. McLay
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2015/172)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region (S/2015/173)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2015/172)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region (S/2015/173)

The President (*spoke in French*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Raymond Tshibanda N'tungamulongo, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Martin Kobler, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/172, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/173, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kobler.

Mr. Kobler (*spoke in French*): I would first like to congratulate France on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. It is as always an honour to appear before the Council to present the latest developments in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

In the coming days the Council will adopt a resolution that will give MONUSCO its new mandate. I thank you, Mr. President, for having given us the means to fulfil our mission, as I thank you, Sir, for also having understood and supported us in difficult times.

(*spoke in English*)

The mandate renewal consultations are a welcome opportunity to look back on what has been achieved over the past year, whether MONUSCO is still well placed to fulfil its mandate and what adjustments could be made in the year to come to work more efficiently.

First of all, I would like to thank the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in particular its Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tshibanda, with whom we have always cooperated in an open and frank spirit. MONUSCO is a temporary guest in his country, a service provider for the Congo, and at the same time a firm advocate of the values of the United Nations. In the presence of Foreign Minister Tshibanda last Saturday, I had the chance to discuss with President Kabila the current state of affairs in the country, in particular the relationship between the Government and MONUSCO. We agreed on a structured dialogue to discuss issues of concern.

I will now update the Council on four points. First, I will discuss the upcoming elections of 2015 and 2016. Secondly, I will brief the Council on the security situation in the country, including the implementation of the United Nations human rights due diligence policy. Thirdly, I will address stabilization efforts and the restitution of State authority. Fourthly, I will discuss how to return to a constructive relationship with the Government by establishing an atmosphere of trust.

My first point is the upcoming elections. I welcome the publication of the global electoral calendar on 12 February, which shall lead to the holding of presidential and legislative elections in November 2016. As demonstrations in Kinshasa, Bukavu, Goma and Lubumbashi in January have shown, the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo care about the holding of timely elections. These elections will

be a pivotal moment in the history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

If so requested, MONUSCO is ready to support the elections logistically, technically and with its good offices. We are determined to support peaceful elections within the framework of the Constitution. In addition, the Secretary-General spoke on the constitutionality of elections at the twenty-fourth African Union summit in January.

As resolution 2147 (2014) has spelled out, all relevant parties are responsible for maintaining an environment conducive to the holding of free, fair, credible, inclusive, transparent, peaceful and timely elections, which includes a free and constructive political debate, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, equitable access to media, including State media, safety and freedom of movement for all candidates as well as for election observers, journalists, human rights defenders and actors from civil society, including women. This is what I mean when I speak of defending the values of the United Nations.

I am concerned about the arrest of several dozen civil society actors the other day. Political space for civil society is a prerequisite for credible elections.

Coming to my second point, security, when the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) arrived in the country some 15 years ago, the country was socially, economically and politically shattered. When MONUC arrived, the country was at civil war. Today, the country is unified. There is a clear, shared and celebrated Congolese identity. It is no longer at war, nor is it in transition. It is a proud nation.

Over this period, the Congolese Government has striven to restore security to its people. It has succeeded in freeing much of the territory from the terror of armed groups. The presence of armed groups is limited to the eastern provinces of the country today. However, the overall security situation is still not stable, nor is whatever stability there is irreversible. Many still live in fear of rape, of attack, of being robbed of already meagre possessions. This fear affects nearly every aspect of daily life in the east — fear to walk to school, fear to go to the market, fear to tend to the fields.

With more security in more places, the time will come for MONUSCO to begin its gradual drawdown. MONUSCO will not stay in the Democratic Republic of the Congo forever; we look forward to the day when it can leave the country, with continuing development support transferred to our colleagues in the United Nations country team. Yes, the Congo has more security than before. Yes, it is on the way to stability. However, more must be done to reduce the threat from armed groups and violence against civilians to a level that can be effectively managed by Congolese institutions. More must also be done to achieve stability by establishing functional, professional and accountable State institutions and strengthening democratic practices. The drawdown should be aligned with progress in those areas. Any exit by MONUSCO should be gradual, progressive and tied to specific targets to be jointly developed by it and the Government. We should therefore aim to consolidate peace and leave behind a peaceful Congo on the path to prosperity.

In the area dominated by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the terrorist attacks — torture, mutilations, beheadings — have been reduced. Recently, in and around Beni, almost 300 people, including women and children, even toddlers, were mutilated as they died in terrorist attacks. As I speak to the Council now, the ADF rebels, hiding in the jungles of Kamango, are being pursued by brave soldiers of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), supported by MONUSCO. They have eaten together, lived together and fought together to protect Congolese families. Our combined efforts against the ADF, like the operations against the Mouvement du 23 mars two years ago, have forged a bond between the FARDC and MONUSCO soldiers. Their cooperation was truly an example of best practices, and demonstrated that when we are united we are strong. I hope it will remain so in future.

The greatest threat to peace and security in the Great Lakes region still remains the Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (FDLR). That is why the Council mandated MONUSCO to support the Government in neutralizing it, a mandate that we should be executing in support of the FARDC. We should not be divided on it. Our operations were jointly planned. We worked with the commanding generals for months in an excellent and constructive partnership. They were, however, replaced by officers who had formerly commanded units with a credible history of human rights violations. We were therefore compelled to suspend our support to the operations under their command.

All other fields of operations — against the ADF, the Forces de resistance patriotiques de l'Ituri and the FDLR in South Kivu — can continue with our support, in full accordance with the human rights due-diligence policy. The decision to suspend support was based on indisputable values enshrined in the protection of human rights. We want to support the fight against the FDLR and also to implement our human rights policy. We do not want to choose between fighting the FDLR and upholding human rights. We owe that to the people of Democratic Republic of the Congo and to ourselves. Safeguarding human rights is fundamental and cannot be compromised. We are guided by that clear compass. And if I may speak personally, I am proud to work for the United Nations and its Secretary-General, with his clear Human Rights up Front policy. I know — and President Kabila himself has confirmed it to me — that the Congolese Government shares the same zero-tolerance policy regarding human-rights violations. I am confident that it will take appropriate measures to remedy this unfortunate situation. However, to avoid any potential misunderstanding, I should say that MONUSCO is fully committed to fighting the FDLR. It is also committed to respecting the human rights due-diligence policy.

There is no purely military solution to the problem of the FDLR. It must be followed by effective non-military initiatives, including a well-functioning demobilization and repatriation process and effective extension of State authority, if we want to have sustainable solutions. In that regard, I still cannot be satisfied with progress so far. Surrendered FDLR elements are still in the camps of Kanyabayonga, Walungu and Kisangani, where they maintain an intact and functioning military structure. A few FDLR combatants have disarmed, yes, but even their demobilization has not started yet, let alone their repatriation.

I now turn to my third point, the stabilization and restitution of State authority. For peace to be sustainable, we need more than military action. Understanding and addressing the root causes of the conflict is essential to disrupting persistent cycles of violence. I would like to update the Council on recent developments. MONUSCO has recently created an natural-resources crime task force with the United Nations Environment Programme and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region. In addition to helping to safeguard the natural wealth of the country for future generations, the Mission, within the limits of its mandate, will explore ways to contribute to addressing the underpinnings of conflict in Congo.

We are no longer dealing only with armed groups, but also with well-organized criminal gangs. The exploitation of natural resources in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is valued at more than $1 billion per year. Part of it is illegally smuggled out of the country, and an estimated 98 per cent of the net profits from the illegal exploitation of natural resources, mainly gold, charcoal and timber, goes to transnational organized criminal networks. Rebel groups retain only 2 per cent of the profits from illegal smuggling. How many hospitals could be built if illegal trade became legal? How many kilometres of roadways rehabilitated? How many teachers paid? The objective is clear — gold should be turned into taxes, taxes into schools and schools into a prosperous future.

(*spoke in French*)

I would like to end with a fourth point, and here I will also direct my comments to His Excellency Mr. Raymond Tshibanda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 15 February, President Joseph Kabila expressed his opinions about MONUSCO's actions and results. If we are to achieve better cooperation, we must create an atmosphere of trust. We should not forget that the Government and MONUSCO are on the same page when it comes to our goals — the well-being of the people, the end of violence in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and also the Mission's departure. We are here to serve the people, and we are therefore also here to provide our services to the Government. Our willingness to leave the country is real and unequivocal, and we know the Government desires it too. MONUSCO's departure must be tied to results and concrete improvement of the situation on the ground. Until then, we need to start finding concrete ways to improve the situation and relations right now. I therefore propose to the Government that we reset cooperation on a basis of mutual trust.

Finally, as always, I should commend those of my colleagues who have recently distinguished themselves. I would like to pay tribute to all the officers of MONUSCO and UNICEF's child protection sections. Every day, hand-in-hand with the FARDC, they free children from the armed groups' grasp. More than 1,000 were liberated in 2014. In the first three months of 2015, more than 160 child soldiers have managed to

escape the FDLR and find refuge with MONUSCO. That is a true success story.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Security Council for the support it has always given us.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Kobler for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Djinnit.

Mr. Djinnit (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to present the sixth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2015/173). I am pleased to do so under the presidency of France, whose support and contributions to achieving the aims of the Framework Agreement, together with those of the other members of the Council, I welcome.

Two years on from the signing of the Framework Agreement in Addis Ababa, which breathed new life into efforts seeking to stabilize the Democratic Republic of the Congo and lay the groundwork for regional cooperation, the region remains at a crossroads. The crises that have broken out in the Central African Republic and South Sudan serve to remind us that the region as a whole remains vulnerable to factors of instability. Despite the significant progress made in establishing an atmosphere of peace and security, major challenges remain to be overcome in order to achieve the objectives of the Framework Agreement.

Those include, first, the neutralization of the armed groups operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. These negative forces continue to commit violence against the civilian population, particularly against women and children, to illegally exploit natural resources and to fuel a climate of mistrust among the countries of the region. Since taking office, I have made it a priority to mobilize the countries of the region and other stakeholders around that goal. I have encouraged the military operations conducted by the Forces armees de la République démocratique du Congo against the Allied Democratic Forces with the support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and I went to Beni with my colleague Martin Kobler and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Mr. Boubacar Diarra, to encourage collaboration.

My Office has also worked together with the stakeholders to implement the Nairobi declarations, including for the repatriation of the former combatants of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) from Rwanda and Uganda. To date, a small number of them have agreed to return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo as part of the repatriation plan agreed with Uganda, while the repatriation process has yet to commence with Rwanda in follow-up to the visit of the delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Kigali in February. Everything must be done to turn the page definitively on the chapter of the M-23 rebellion so that all energies can be focused on the other negative forces.

At the same time, I joined in efforts encouraging the launching of military action against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) following the passing of the deadline of 2 January 2015. I took part in the series of consultations organized by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) towards the end of last year. I welcome the consensus that eventually emerged on this sensitive issue. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its armed forces on the military operations they launched against the FDLR. I encourage once again the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO to resume their full cooperation in the framework of operations against the FDLR and to strengthen their partnership through a structured strategic dialogue. During my meeting with President Kabila on 13 March, he assured assured me of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's readiness for such dialogue.

Secondly, in my various interactions in the region, I encouraged efforts and called for initiatives aiming to improve relations among the countries of the region with a view to resolving misunderstandings and suspicions and building the level of trust needed for progress in the Framework Agreement process. I want to thank President Dos Santos, in his capacity as Chairman of the ICGLR, and other leaders of the region for their commitment in that regard. I reiterate my readiness to support these efforts at reconciliation among States so as to promote a climate that is more conducive to cooperation. In that context, I welcome the intention of President Kabila to convene a summit of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries.

Finally, aware that the region was embarking on an election cycle that would be crucial for strengthening democracy and stability, I sought, in liaison with my United Nations colleagues in the region and the group of Special Envoys, to provide my contribution to efforts aimed at encouraging the holding of inclusive, transparent and peaceful elections. We will continue to make efforts to help the countries of the region to make of those elections opportunities to strengthen their democratic achievements and stability, in accordance with the spirit of the Framework Agreement.

Beyond those crucial actions, we must tackle the other underlying causes of the instability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, as per our commitments under the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement. To that end, in liaison with the ICGLR and all stakeholders, my Office will contribute to the initiatives — already under way or planned — in order to create conditions conducive to the return of refugees, reconciliation among local communities and lasting solutions to the complex issues of citizenship and land. That area of work and others, such as the fight against the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the promotion of regional judicial cooperation, are among the priority actions of my road map.

In terms of economic development, I am pleased to note the many development and cooperation initiatives launched in recent years, in particular the various regional development corridors. My Office is working to support those commendable efforts, including by organizing this coming July — in collaboration with the World Bank, the European Union and the African Union — a conference for partners focusing on regional development issues in the Great Lakes region. Moreover, following the regional consultations held in Luanda in December 2014, which endorsed the investment opportunities document, my Office and the ICGLR, with the support of other partners, began making preparations for the conference on private sector investment in the Great Lakes region, to be held in Kinshasa in the last quarter of 2015. That first conference of its kind aims to promote investment and job-creation opportunities, strengthen public-private partnerships and create a platform for exchange among investors. The conference will enhance the prospects for peace through investment opportunities in the region.

The participation of civil society and women's organizations in efforts aiming to end instability and facilitate the implementation of the Framework Agreement is essential. In that regard, efforts are under way to establish a regional coalition of civil society, with the joint support of my Office and ICGLR Executive Secretariat. We are likewise working closely with the ICGLR to strengthen initiatives in favour of women that contribute to peace in the Great Lakes region. In that respect, the Women's Platform for the Framework Agreement, launched by Mary Robinson, continues, under my auspices, to support the political and economic empowerment of women, including through the financing of socioeconomic activities. I am pleased to inform the Council that the first round of grants from a special trust fund established by my Office to support the Women's Platform was awarded in November 2014 for women's organizations from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. I want to thank the Governments of the Netherlands, Ireland and Norway, which contributed to my Office's special trust fund.

(spoke in English)

In conclusion, let me say a few words on the governance structures and monitoring mechanisms of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. The current regional context calls for the strengthening of these structures and mechanisms in order to maintain momentum to effectively deliver national, regional and international commitments through proactive engagement within the Regional Oversight Mechanism and an enhanced role for the Technical Support Committee. In the weeks ahead, I will consult with the leadership of the African Union and the other co-guarantors of the Framework Agreement, the ICGLR and SADC, on the best ways to improve the Framework's governance structures and monitoring mechanisms.

Let me also put on record my appreciation for the cooperation I am receiving from the signatory countries and the excellent collaboration developed with my colleagues in the region, especially Special Representative of the Secretary-General Kobler and Special Envoy Uteem, as well as the United Nations system in the Great Lakes region. I wish to express my appreciation for the good cooperation we have forged with the African Union, as the co-promoter of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework process, and the other co-guarantors of the agreement — ICGLR and SADC. I would like to also thank my fellow Special Envoys, including Russ Feingold, who recently left his

position after 18 months of brilliant service, for their support and contribution.

Sustaining the momentum of the Framework agreement lies in the continued commitment of the signatory countries and concerned stakeholders. I wish, in this regard, to continue to count on the continued engagement and support of the Council. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region have made considerable progress in overcoming the tragedies of the past, but they have yet to achieve irreversible progress for lasting peace. I reiterate my commitment to working tirelessly and joining hands with regional and other stakeholders towards delivering the promises of the Framework agreement and assisting the region in fulfilling its aspirations for shared peace and prosperity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Djinnit for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Tshibanda N'tungamulongo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month of March, and to tell you how honoured we are to see France, a friendly country, guiding the Council's deliberations today. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak before the Council at this meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, an issue that is of paramount importance to my country.

Allow me to take this opportunity to express once again to the Council the gratitude of the people and Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the efforts undertaken by the United Nations in order to maintain the sovereignty and territorial integrity our country and to guarantee its peace and stability. Finally, I would like to pay a heartfelt tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the tireless concern he has always demonstrated and for his personal involvement in seeking and consolidating peace in my country.

Relations between the United Nations and the Democratic Republic of the Congo go back to when my country gained international sovereignty nearly 55 years ago, since when the United Nations and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have achieved so many memorable things together. We are convinced that history will show this much better than we are able to do in just a few minutes today. These relations have almost always been good, often excellent, if not exemplary. Unfortunately, today we must recognize that they are going through some difficulties. Our greatest wish is that this difficult period should pass as quickly as possible. The history of our country and our common political will do not allow us to take any path other than that of conciliation.

How could we not be convinced of this when we know that it is specifically due to the partnership between the United Nations and the Democratic Republic of the Congo that the territorial integrity and sovereignty of my country have been safeguarded, in spite of all the covetousness and aggressions, be they direct or by proxy? We see that peace, which is often interrupted, has each time been re-established and then consolidated, both in my country and throughout the African Great Lakes region. We see each day a greater consolidation of the State's authority and respect for human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while free elections, the guarantors of strong and credible institutions, are closer to becoming a reality each day as the only way to access and preserve public authority in my country. All the while, the United Nations has reminded Member States of their obligations under the terms of its Charter, including full respect for democratic principles and the sanctity of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States.

We believe that in order to consolidate these gains, we, the United Nations and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have the duty to continue to work as a team and, to that end, to perpetuate the spirit that has always characterized this partnership and been a key factor of its effectiveness. It is a spirit of dialogue and mutual respect, in accordance with the principles of the Charter, including respect at all times and in all circumstances of the intangible sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For its part, the Democratic Republic of the Congo affirms loud and clear it has always been and will always remain true to that spirit.

There are four current sticking points in the relations between the United Nations and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They are, first, the strategic review and the logical consequences following therefrom, especially with regard to the transfer of responsibilities from the United Nations Organization

Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the pace of the drawdown of United Nations troops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; secondly, the forced disarmament of the Rwandan rebels of the Forces democratiques de liberation du Rwanda (FDLR); thirdly, the development of the presence of Ugandan rebels of the Allied Democratic Forces — National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU) in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and, fourthly, the political consequences of the end of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) rebellion.

In order to inform Council members, please allow me to clarify the viewpoint of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on these points in view of recent developments in the security, political and economic situations in the field. I note that the current situation on the ground is improving daily. In terms of the strategic review, I recall that the Organization has been present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at our request, since 1999, first in the form of a peacekeeping mission and then as a stabilization mission. It has deployed there and maintains about 20,000 troops, including 3,000 of the Force Intervention Brigade, which is specifically charged with supporting the Forces armees de la République democratique du Congo (FARDC) in neutralizing the negative forces in the east of the country. We would also like to recall that, since the very beginning, it has been agreed that the United Nations contribution would be progressively reviewed in view of a reduction as and when the security threats were diminished and the FARDC achieved a level of performance that enabled it to ensure the country's security themselves.

When the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo arrived, almost half of the country was living in insecurity and was outside the effective control of the national authorities. The country was divided into as many semi-autonomous territories, administrations and armies as there were rebel groups. Given the almost complete disintegration of the State, the massive violations of human rights — in particular the recruitment of child soldiers, rape and other sexual violence — had reached a level that shocked the human conscience.

Today, there are certainly still some pockets of insecurity maintained by the Ugandan terrorists in and around the town of Beni and North Kivu ar[illegible] Rwandan rebels of the FDLR in certain small are[illegible] North Kivu and South Kivu. However, everywhere else in the country peace and security reign, including in Ituri and to the north of Katanga. The few incidents of disorder that have sporadically caused concern for citizens, brought about by the activism of some lost sheep, are law-and-order issues that have been brought into line in one way or another.

Moreover, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo today there is a functioning State whose authority is effectively exercised throughout almost all the national territory. There are legitimate and effective institutions, as evidenced by our economic performance, which includes a 9.5 per cent growth in our gross domestic product in 2014, which, in the opinion of credible institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, could reach 10 per cent in 2015; an inflation rate close to zero; a stable exchange rate for the national currency; steadily increasing international reserves and foreign direct investment; the implementation of several important reforms, as a result of which the country has been ranked one of the top 10 reformer countries in the world by the World Bank; and the rehabilitation and construction, in less than 5 years, of more schools, hospitals and kilometres of roads than over the previous 50 years.

There is an army that is actively being rebuilt and whose continued increase in power is unquestionable. The defeat of the M-23, the almost complete neutralization of ADF-NALU and the ongoing military operations against the FDLR are just some of the irrefutable pieces of evidence to that effect. Democracy is being established, with the first truly free and democratic elections in our history held in 2006, legislative and presidential elections held on time in 2011, the effective implementation of measures for decentralization and local, municipal, urban, provincial, senatorial, parliamentary and presidential elections planned to be held in 2015 and 2016.

In view of this non-exhaustive list, any objective observer must acknowledge that enormous work has been done. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is grateful to the United Nations for its invaluable support in the pursuit and achievement of those results. However, it also believes that the time has come for it to fully shoulder its responsibilities with respect to its security and that of its people. It therefore calls for the Council to respond to this legitimate aspiration, which is inseparable from the very notion of national sovereignty.

In that regard, I wish to bring to the attention of Council members the considerable efforts made by my Government in terms of security sector reform. Those efforts extend beyond officially defining a military doctrine; developing a comprehensive reform plan; Parliament adopting and the Head of State promulgating all laws required for the army and national police; appointing to command positions, in line with the new architecture of both elements; and creating a quick reaction force, which the Council wants and expects and is already well under way.

It is in that context that one must view the training and equiping of the following three brigades: the 11th Brigade, which is famous for its victorious operations against M-23 rebels and the ADF, under the command of the late General Mamadou Ndala. That Brigade is made up of three battalions that were trained under a Chinese cooperation programme; the 21st Brigade, which is made up of three battalions trained by South Africa and currently deployed in Katanga; and the 31st Brigade, which is made up of three battalions and whose soldiers were trained under a Belgian cooperation programme, served in earlier pacification operations in North Kivu and will soon be deployed as part of the efforts to pursue the FDLR in the Congolese forest.

In terms of the implementation of resolution 2147 (2014), on the forced disarmament of Rwandan FDLR rebels, I would start by deploring the incident that caused MONUSCO to not participate directly in that disarmament, even though that was among the tasks that our Organization was to accomplish in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On this subject, I would like to state that this situation did not arise because of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which did nothing but note MONUSCO's decision to suspend its support. What is more, the Congolese authorities were not informed, before their nomination to their posts, of the fact that the officers in question were designated "red" by the MONUSCO service.

I would like to further state that our country is involved in all United Nations efforts for the promotion and respect of human rights, so that is not at issue here. Eloquent proof of that is the fact that at least a third of the population in prisons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is made up of elements from the defence and security forces, officers and enlisted men alike. That would not have been the case if we had been complacent about them. That said, like any United Nations Member State and in accordance with the Charter, the Democratic Republic of the Congo wants to maintain full autonomy in appointing its civilian and military cadres. Only obstacles that have actually been documented can, in full sovereignty, be taken into account when appointments are made.

Despite MONUSCO's withdrawal of support, and as it cannot shirk its responsibilities, the FARDC has launched and is currently carrying out military operations against the FDLR. To date, significant progress has been made. Almost 200 combatants — including, unfortunately, 91 child soldiers — have been arrested or have given themselves up. Former strongholds such as Mulenge, Kitoga, Kigogo, Kangova and Kashindaba in South Kivu, and Kahumbu, Katemba, Kisoro and Mulembe in North Kivu have been liberated. The remaining rebel troops have plunged into the deep forest, thus getting further from the Rwandan border, where they sought to create insecurity in that neighbouring country. Our troops are hot on their heels, and our determination to eradicate that harmful force is such that we will not cease operations until we achieve that final result, whatever the cost in time and resources, whether human, financial or material.

Regarding the evolution of the presence of Ugandan ADF-NALU rebels in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to state that MONUSCO and FARDC have cooperated positively since the rebels scattered and became lawless terrorists with no other strategy than surprise attacks on isolated villages, where they burn down huts and decapitate their inhabitants before fleeing. We are currently in the search stage. Everyone recognizes that Congolese troops behave so as to bring honour to our country in those operations.

I now come to the subject of the elimination of the M-23 rebellion. That rebellion came to an end under the Addis Ababa Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and the conclusions of the Nairobi talks. In accordance with the Framework agreement and the conclusions of Nairobi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has begun a process of political dialogue through national consultations and has, in this respect and following those consultations, declared amnesty for acts of war, in particular those committed by former M-23 rebels. Indeed, of the 1,678 former rebels who are on the run and have taken refuge in Uganda and the 453 other refugees in Rwanda, 777 have at this stage

taken advantage of the amnesty law and 182 of those have voluntarily returned to the country. Those who remain in the two neighbouring countries are not there because the Democratic Republic of the Congo will not receive them or has not facilitated that process enough, but rather because, as this repatriation is voluntary, that decision must be made by the former M-23 combatants themselves. Some of them, at this point, seem to prefer to stay where they are. We are actively seeking to convince them to return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we are counting on the international community, and in particular the special envoys, to help us achieve that.

To give the full picture of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to reiterate my Government's determination to adhere more strongly than ever to the culture of democracy. Therefore, after an open and rich debate, the national independent electoral commission published a comprehensive timetable for the upcoming elections. At the same time, it set the budget necessary to hold all elections in the election cycle. This demonstrates our commitment to holding transparent, credible and peaceful elections. We are confident that the friends of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will support us in this exercise in learning and deepening of democracy in a climate of peace by avoiding any interference that could add fuel to the fire. Their financial support — offered in a timely manner and not at the last minute — will contribute equally to that end.

In conclusion, we are ready to launch a strategic dialogue with the United Nations on all the issues I have raised today, with a view to achieving consensus before the Council makes its decision. I wish to reiterate that the FARDC's current high level of performance offers an objective demonstration of our desire to negotiate the gradual reduction of MONUSCO troops. We know that our concept for this drawdown is shared by the Organization and that it is only its scope and pace that are up for discussion. We are convinced that when we return on Monday, as scheduled, we will undoubtedly be able to reach agreement and offer a consensual proposal to the Council.

Finally, I reaffirm that the Democratic Republic of the Congo has always enjoyed exemplary cooperation with the United Nations and that it shall continue to do so. We count on the United Nations to do its share to that end.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Minister Tshibanda N'tungamulongo for his statement.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.